Chapter 88

The Rewards and Challenges of an Ongoing In-Service Teacher Training Programme

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ABSTRACT

Designing and conducting an effective scheme of in service teacher training is a challenge that supervisors face nowadays. Although this kind of training has grown in importance, its quality varies significantly according to their designer's ability to organize a programme which is mainly focused on ongoing professional development. This chapter aims at describing a model of in-service, which has been implemented at a language institution for some time now. The authors will explain the rationale for the approach, and offer a detailed account of the scheme they have devised and which has been carried out with a considerable degree of success. To conclude, they will report on the implications of their findings and specifically address the need to maintain a programme which may shape the future of academic institutions by focusing on teachers' individual growth.

INTRODUCTION

In-service, INSET, or in-house teacher training, is a well-established practice in many countries by those schools which aim at quality in their educational work. INSETs are in Sarney's view (2016) "an opportunity to share knowledge, gain important skills, and a rich source for teacher motivation and empowerment" (p.16).

This chapter describes a scheme of in-service teacher training programme currently in use at a private language school in Brazil. The teacher trainers chose clinical supervision as the training model for the professional development of the teachers working at the institution. Clinical supervision is, in Gaies and Bowers' view, (1990) "an ongoing process of teacher development based on direct observa-

tion of classroom teaching performance" (p.168). In clinical supervision, the teacher trainer also called supervisor, and the teacher, work together using what actually happens in the language classroom as raw material for investigation and as a tool for the teacher's development. In short, clinical supervision is a classroom-centred process which implies, in Wallace's words (2001), an "acceptance of the reflective model of professional development" (p.108).

Specifically, the chapter examines the ways an in-service training programme based on clinical supervision was implemented for the development of around 30 teachers and 1500 students in a monolingual context where supervisors, teachers, and students speak Brazilian Portuguese as their first language. The teachers are familiarized with Communicative Language Teaching, and thus they are expected to help students use English effectively, for reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

The chapter starts by considering the rationale behind the approach to the scheme, followed by the description of the main components, procedures, and the specific characteristics which may have led the scheme to succeed. The chapter also reports on the necessary changes which occurred in both the teachers' and the supervisors' attitude as a consequence of the improvement in the quality of the training. The particular difficulties distinctive to the training programme, as well as the possible solutions are also outlined.

To conclude, some specific recommendations are made, and desirable future developments of the in-service programme are suggested. The authors also reflect on the possible professional rewards, the implementation of an in-service programme may bring to teachers and to institutions as well.

BACKGROUND

This in-service teaching programme involved around 30 teachers and 1500 students under the supervision of two experienced teacher trainers. The teachers' experience vary from two, to more than twenty years of teaching. The need to research and experiment with effective ways to help teachers improve and assist them in their process of professional development encouraged the supervisors to choose clinical supervision as a model for the in-service training programme of the institution.

Wallace (2001) categorizes *clinical supervision* as a supervisory behaviour moving between two opposite poles: prescriptive approach and collaborative approach. He makes it clear that "some supervisors may show characteristics of both approaches in the same supervisory conference" (Wallace, 2001, p.110). In the same way, this supervisory scheme addressed the dual function of clinical supervision, by trying to increase teachers' classroom practice repertoire – the training aspect of the scheme – and by making them able to question and reflect critically about particular issues in their teaching practice – the developmental aspect of teacher's education.

Being responsible for the academic development of the institution, the authors realized that no matter how qualified teachers are, they tend to fossilize procedures and even become 'blind' to some aspects of their teaching, if they are not challenged by supervisors to go on investigating and reflecting about what happens in their classroom. Although teaching qualifications may be an effective contribution to one's professional life, the authors agree with James when he states that (2001), "genuine change in teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes is a long process, in effect, career-long" (p.9). Thus, the authors of this chapter would say that continuity should be the basic characteristic of teachers' educational process. In short, this chapter aims at investigating the effectiveness of a continuous system of support and investigation of teachers' classroom work.

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